

SUNDRIES CADDY FOR FURNITURECROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/483,168, entitled COUPLE'S CADDY filed June 27, 2003.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates in general to apparatus for holding sundry items and in particular to a sundries caddy that is selectively positionable in multiple orientations from cushioned furniture such as beds, chairs, sofas and the like.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Furniture caddies for storing small sundries such as remote controls, television listings, magazines and the like are well known. A common variety is suspended from the arm of a chair or sofa, examples of which are disclosed in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,872,702 and D346,085. While useful for their intended purposes, such devices are designed to assume a single in-use position and cannot be used with beds. U.S. Patent Nos. 5,605,235 and 5,758,972 describe sundries caddies that may be used with any type of furniture comprising a cushioning object supported by a cushion support structure, such as a conventional sofa, chair or mattress and box spring bed. The device described in U.S. Patent No. 5,605,235 is rigid in construction whereas the device disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,758,972 is made from flexible material. In both cases, however, a first portion of the devices is captured between the furniture cushion and

cushion support structure whereby the caddy is suspended from the furniture. The remaining free portion of the caddy depends downwardly from the captured portion and supports one or more upwardly open pouches, pockets or the like for receiving sundry items. And, U.S. Patent No. 5,758,972 teaches a flexible sundries caddy that may be suspended from the arm of a sofa or chair or captured between furniture cushioning and cushion support structure. While all of these devices perform the basic function of holding sundries, they can assume only one orientation whereby their free portions depend downwardly from their furniture-suspended portions. As a consequence, they are limited in the manner in which they can be used with cushioned furniture. Moreover, sundries caddies that are captured by cushioned furniture hold their contents relatively close to the floor, which is a disadvantage to persons that suffer pain when bending over.

An advantage exists, therefore, for a versatile sundries caddy that may be suspended in multiple ways from cushioned furniture whereby a user may orient the caddy to best suit his or her tastes or needs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A sundries caddy for use with furniture comprising a cushioning object supported by a cushion support structure. The caddy includes first and second members that may be rigidly, hingedly or releasably connected to one another. One of the members is insertable between the cushioning object and the support structure of the furniture so as to define a captured portion of the caddy in operation. The other member defines a free portion of the caddy in operation, whereby the free portion is disposed

substantially vertically when the captured portion is inserted between the furniture cushioning object and support structure. The caddy additionally includes a receptacle having an open end for releasably receiving sundries therein and structure for connecting the receptacle to the free portion whereby a user of the caddy can orient the open end of said receptacle upwardly regardless of whether the free portion extends upwardly or downwardly with respect to the captured portion. With such a construction, a user may easily orient the caddy to his or her choosing.

Other details, objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent as the following description of the presently preferred embodiments and presently preferred methods of practicing the invention proceeds.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will become more readily apparent from the following description of preferred embodiments thereof shown, by way of example only, in the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1A is a perspective and partially cut view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in one operative orientation with respect to a first type of cushioned furniture;

FIG. 1B is a perspective and partially cut view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in another operative orientation with respect to a first type of cushioned furniture;

FIG. 2A is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in one operative orientation with respect to a second type of cushioned furniture;

FIG. 2B is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in another operative orientation with respect to a second type of cushioned furniture;

FIG. 3A is a side elevation view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in another operative orientation with respect to a second type of cushioned furniture;

FIG. 3B is a front elevation view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in another operative orientation with respect to a second type of cushioned furniture;

FIG. 4A is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in one operative orientation;

FIG. 4B is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in another operative orientation;

FIG. 5A is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in one operative orientation;

FIG. 5B is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in another operative orientation;

FIG. 6A is a perspective view of an embodiment of a receptacle support of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention;

FIG. 6B is a perspective view a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in one operative orientation and including the receptacle support of FIG. 6A having a receptacle connected thereto;

FIG. 6C is a reverse perspective view of the furniture sundries caddy shown in FIG. 6B;

FIG. 6D is a perspective view of a embodiment of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in another operative orientation;

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of a further embodiment of a receptacle support of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention;

FIG. 8A is a perspective view of a further embodiment of a receptacle support of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention;

FIGS. 8B and 8C are rear and side views, respectively, of a receptacle suitable for use with the receptacle support of FIG. 8A;

FIGS. 9A and 9B are perspective views of further embodiments of receptacle supports of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention;

FIGS. 9B and 9C are rear and side views, respectively, of a receptacle suitable for use with the receptacle support of FIGS. 9A and 9B;

FIG. 10A is a perspective view of a further embodiment of a receptacle support of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention;

FIG. 10B is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in one operative orientation and including the receptacle support of FIG. 10A having a receptacle connected thereto;

FIG. 10C is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention disposed in another operative orientation and including the receptacle support of FIG. 8A having a receptacle connected thereto; and

FIGS. 11A and 11B show an exemplary manner by which first and second substantially planar support members of a receptacle support of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention may be releasably connected to one another.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to the drawings wherein like or similar references indicate like or similar elements throughout the several views, there is shown in FIG. 1A a first embodiment of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present

invention. The caddy, identified generally by reference numeral 10, is shown in a first operative orientation with respect to a piece of cushioned furniture 12. Furniture 12 may be any item of cushioned furniture that comprises at least one cushioning object 14 supported by a cushion support structure 16. By way of example, furniture 12 may be a chair, a sofa (as shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B) or a bed (as shown in FIGS 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B). In the event furniture 12 is a sofa or chair, cushioning object 14 is a seat cushion and cushion support structure 16 is that structure beneath the cushion upon which the cushion rests. If furniture 12 is a bed, cushioning object 14 is a mattress and cushion support structure 16 is a box spring or similar support structure. Generally, caddy 10 comprises a receptacle support including a first member 18 connected to a second member 20. The receptacle support of all embodiments of the present invention is desirably made of rigid materials, preferably plastics or stamped sheet metal. As will be discussed in greater detail in connection with descriptions of the several embodiments of the invention disclosed herein, the connection between first and second members 18 and 20 may be permanent, releasable or pivotable. If permanent, the first and second members are preferably joined at a substantially perpendicular angle.

As shown in FIGS. 1A and 1B, first member 18 is insertable between the cushioning object 14 and the support structure 16 of the furniture 12 so as to define a captured portion of the caddy 10 when inserted between the cushioning object and support structure. With the first member 18 so disposed, the second member 20 defines a free portion of the caddy, whereby the free portion is disposed substantially vertically when the captured portion is inserted between the furniture cushioning object and support structure. At least

one of the first and second members is substantially planar in shape such that it serves as good anchorage when functioning as the captured portion of the caddy. It is also possible that both of the first and second members 18 and 20 may be substantially planar in shape whereby they may be interchangeably operable as the captured and free portions of the caddy when in use.

Caddy 16 further comprises a receptacle 22 having an open end for receiving one or more sundry articles 24 such as, for example, remote controls, television listings, magazines and the like. Receptacle 22 and all other sundries receptacles subsequently described herein may be made of soft fabric or plastic in the manner of a pouch or it may be fashioned as a substantially rigid box. Additionally, the sundries receptacles of the present invention may comprise single or multiple sundries receiving compartments or pockets. Later drawing figures provide details of several preferred means for releasably connecting receptacle 22 to the free portion of the caddy whereby a user of the caddy can orient the open end of the receptacle upwardly regardless of whether the free portion extends upwardly or downwardly with respect to the captured portion. FIGS. 1A and 1B illustrate the free portion of the caddy extending downwardly and upwardly, respectively, with respect to the captured portion thereof.

In FIGS. 2A and 2B cushioned furniture 12 is a bed. Reference numerals are provided in those figures and in FIGS. 3A-3B for completeness of illustration but the structural components identified by those numerals are not described in detail since they correspond in structure and function to their counterparts in FIGS. 1A and 1B. As shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B, first member 18 is again the captured

portion of caddy 10 and second member 20 is the free portion thereof. In FIG. 2A the free portion of the caddy extends downwardly with respect to the captured portion. In FIG. 2B the free portion of the caddy extends upwardly with respect to the captured portion.

In FIGS. 3A and 3B cushioned furniture 12 is again a bed. As shown in those figures, first member 18 is again the captured portion of caddy 10 and second member 20 is the free portion. With the caddy positioned in the manner shown in FIGS. 3A and 3B, i.e., along the headboard 26 of a conventional mattress, the free portion of the caddy can only extend upwardly with respect to the captured portion. An advantage of placing caddy 10 along the headboard 26 is that permits ready access to sundries 24 by two persons sharing the same bed. It will be understood, however, if the connection between first and second members 18, 20 is rigid, then caddy 10 may also be disposed along the sides of a bed in the manner shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B.

However, FIG. 3A illustrates that the connection 28 between first and second members 18, 20 may be a pivoted connection. A pivoted connection 28 linking the first and second members, which may be employed in any of the receptacle supports described herein, permits caddy 10 to be folded into a compact size which is beneficial for both shipping and storage. If the first and second members are pivotally connected at 28 by a conventional hinge, then the caddy may be used in the positions shown in 2A, 3A and 3B, but not as shown in FIG. 2B. However, the hinge may be one that permits the "free" one of the first and second members to be selectively but releasably oriented upwardly or downwardly in respect to the "captured" one of the first and

second members. In that way, the caddy may be used in all of the positions shown in 2A, 2B, 3A and 3B.

The remaining figures show alternative presently preferred embodiments and features of the sundries caddy according to the present invention.

Beginning with FIG. 4A, there is shown in perspective view an embodiment of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention. The receptacle support comprises a first member 18a and a second member 20a joined at a substantially perpendicular angle. In this and all other embodiments of the present invention, at least one of the first and second members 18a, 20a is preferably substantially planar in shape to facilitate its insertion between a furniture cushion and its underlying support structure and to provide stability of the caddy when captured by the furniture. Alternatively, as illustrated, both of the first and second members may be substantially planar whereby they may be interchangeably operable as the captured portion and the free portion when the caddy is in use. The distal end(s) of the at least one substantially planar first and second members 18a, 20a may be angular in shape similar to those shown in the preceding figures. In the alternative, they may be somewhat curved or rounded in shape as shown in FIG. 4A and the remaining figures, whereby they are less likely to cause damage to the furniture when inserted therein.

Receptacle 22a and sundries 24a are shown in phantom line in FIGS. 4A and 4B to reveal means 30a for connecting the receptacle to the free portion of the caddy, i.e., member 20a, whereby a user of the caddy can orient the open end of the receptacle upwardly regardless of whether the

free portion extends upwardly (FIG. 4A) or downwardly (FIG. 4B) with respect to the captured portion, member 18a. Means 30a may provide a permanent or releasable connection between member 20a and receptacle 22a. If a permanent connection is desired, means 30a may be constructed as a rivet that passes through the rear wall of receptacle 22a and is secured to member 20a and that functions as a pivot point about which the receptacle may rotate. If a releasable connection is desired, means 30a may be constructed as a snap fastener cooperatively connected to the rear wall of receptacle 22a and to member 20a and that likewise functions as a pivot point about which the receptacle may rotate. When a user chooses to invert the receptacle support from the position shown in FIG. 4A to the position shown in FIG. 4B, he or she removes the captured portion of the caddy (first member 18b) from the furniture, inverts the receptacle support while simultaneously rotating the receptacle 180° about the pivot axis of rivet or snap fastener 30a and reinserts first member 18b between the unillustrated cushion and cushion support structure.

In order to prevent inadvertent rotation of the receptacle with respect to the free portion, second member 20a preferably includes interference means 32a that engage the rear of the receptacle. Representative interference means may be one or more raised areas or protrusions that exert sufficient frictional interference with the rear wall of the receptacle or present a surmountable obstruction with a flange that may be provided at or near the open end of the receptacle such that unintended rotation of the receptacle is avoided and sundries 24a safely remain therein. If, however, two or more snap fasteners are used to releasably connect the receptacle and the free member of the receptacle support, then interference means 32a becomes unnecessary.

FIGS. 5A and 5B show perspective views of another embodiment of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention in opposite operative positions and with receptacle 22b and sundries 24b drawn in phantom line for clarity of illustration. The caddy comprises a first member 18b and a second member 20b joined at a substantially perpendicular angle. Pursuant to this embodiment, the caddy includes means 30b for releasably connecting the receptacle 22b to the free portion of the caddy, member 20b. Means 30b is preferably a hook and loop type fastener system such as VELCRO® or the like wherein one layer of the hook and loop type fastener system is adhered to member 20b, as shown, and the other layer thereof is adhered to the rear wall of the receptacle 24b. When a user chooses to invert the receptacle support from the position shown in FIG. 5A to the position shown in FIG. 5B, he or she first pulls on the receptacle to separate the layers of the hook and loop fastener system. The user then removes the captured portion of the caddy (first member 18b) from the furniture, inverts the receptacle support and reinserts first member 18b between the unillustrated cushion and cushion support structure. Then the user realigns the layers of the hook and loop fastener system and presses the receptacle against the second portion 20b. For each of the releasable connection means described hereinafter, a user performs essentially the same functions when inverting the receptacle support of the caddy. Consequently, the specific steps for executing such inversions will not be described in detail.

FIG. 6A is a perspective view of another embodiment of a receptacle support of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention. FIG. 6B is a perspective view of a furniture sundries caddy disposed in one operative orientation and including the receptacle support of FIG. 6A

having a receptacle 22c connected thereto. FIG. 6C is a reverse perspective view of the furniture sundries caddy shown in FIG. 6B. And, FIG. 6D is a perspective view of the furniture sundries caddy of FIGS. 6B and 6C disposed in an inverted operative orientation. According to this embodiment, means 30c for releasably connecting receptacle 22c to the free portion comprise at least one elastic band carried by the receptacle that is adapted to grippingly engage the free portion. The receptacle support preferably includes means 32c for enhancing engagement of said at least one elastic band to said free portion. More particularly, means 32c preferably comprises at least one pair of corresponding notches provided along opposite edges of said free portion for receiving the at least one elastic band. It will be understood that the elastic band(s) 30c may be carried by the free portion of the receptacle support whereby the receptacle support grippingly engages the receptacle rather than vice versa.

In the embodiment of the invention depicted in FIGS. 6B-6D, receptacle 22c is constructed as a supple pouch. The pouch may consist of a single pocket. Alternatively, the pouch may include a plurality of pockets. Further, the pouch may include releasable fastener means 34c such as snaps, buttons, hook and loop type fasteners, or the like, whereby the left and right side of the pouch may be opened to expose interior pockets (not illustrated) adapted for receiving additional sundries.

FIG. 7 shows a perspective view of another embodiment of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention. The caddy comprises a first member 18d and a second member 20d joined at a substantially perpendicular angle. Although the receptacle support is shown with its

free portion, i.e., second member 20d, in the "downward" operative position, like all embodiments of the present invention it may also be disposed in the "upward" operative position at the user's discretion. Pursuant to this embodiment, the caddy includes bracket means 30d for releasably connecting the receptacle 22d (shown in phantom line) to the free portion of the caddy. Bracket means 30b may be, as illustrated, a continuous bracket, or it may consist of a pair of opposed partial brackets affixed to second member 20d. The bracket means define an opening for slidably receiving a receptacle 22d. According to this embodiment, the receptacle is provided on at least a portion of the periphery of its open end with an outwardly directed flange 22d' which is adapted to rest atop one edge of the bracket means when the receptacle is received therein. When the receptacle support is inverted and the receptacle is reinserted, flange 22d' rests atop the opposite edge of the bracket means.

FIG. 8A is a perspective view of another embodiment of a receptacle support of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention comprising a first member 18e and a second member 20e joined at a substantially perpendicular angle. According to this embodiment, the means for releasably connecting the receptacle 22e (FIGS. 8B and 8C) to the free portion, i.e., second member 20e, of the receptacle support is a cooperating male and female fastener arrangement carried by the receptacle and receptacle support. As illustrated in FIG. 8A, the female component of that arrangement preferably is in the form of at least one horizontally extending slot 30e provided in the receptacle support second member 20e. And, as shown in FIGS. 8B and 8C, the male component of the arrangement preferably is in the form of a tab 30e' projecting outwardly and downwardly from

the rear wall of receptacle 22e. Although one horizontally extending slot 30e would be sufficient to achieve the objects of the present end, it is preferable that more than one such slot be present. In that way, the user is able to select a slot that places the receptacle 22e at an preferred elevation during use.

FIGS. 9A and 9B are perspectives view of other embodiments a receptacle support of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention. In FIG. 9A the receptacle comprises a first member 18f and a second member 20f joined at a substantially perpendicular angle. Similarly, in FIG. 9B the receptacle comprises a first member 18g and a second member 20g joined at a substantially perpendicular angle. According to these embodiments, the means for releasably connecting the receptacle 22f (FIGS. 9C and 9D) to the free portions, i.e., second members 20f and 20g, of the receptacle support is another cooperating male and female fastener arrangement carried by the receptacle and receptacle support. As illustrated in FIGS. 9A and 9B, the female component of that arrangement preferably is in the form of at least one vertically extending slot provided in the receptacle support second members 20f and 20g. In FIG. 9A, two slots are provided, one substantially at the juncture of the first and second portions 18f, 20f and the other substantially at the distal end of the free portion 20f. In FIG. 9B, a single slot 30g is provided generally in a central region of the free portion 20g.

As shown in FIGS. 9C and 9D, the male component of the arrangement preferably is in the form of a pin 30f' projecting outwardly from the rear wall of receptacle 22f. Pin 30f' is preferably in the form of a shaft with an enlarged distal end. The enlarged end of the pin is adapted to pass through similarly enlarged areas of slots 30f and

30g. Once the pin passes an enlarged area of a slot, the pin shaft slides in the slot until the receptacle 22f comes to a settled position at the bottom of the slot.

Although the male component of the male and female fastener arrangement described in connection with FIGS. 8A-8C and 9A-9D is carried by the receptacle and the female component by the receptacle support, the relative positions of the male and female components may be reversed, i.e., the male component may be provided on the receptacle support and the female component may be provided on the receptacle.

FIG. 10 shows a perspective view of another embodiment of a furniture sundries caddy according to the present invention. The caddy comprises a first member 18h and a second member 20h joined at a substantially perpendicular angle. According to this embodiment, the means 30h for releasably connecting receptacle 22h to the free portion comprises a pocket attached to the receptacle. The pocket 30h has an open end facing in a direction substantially opposite the open end of the receptacle. The pocket is constructed and arranged so as to be operable to receive one end of the free portion when the caddy is disposed in a first operative orientation (FIG. 10B) and the opposite end of the free portion when the caddy is disposed in an inverted second operative orientation (FIG. 10C).

FIGS. 11a and 11b illustrate means according to the invention for releasably connecting the first and second members 18i, 20i of the receptacle support at a substantially perpendicular angle. Those means may comprise cooperating slots 36i provided in each of first and second members 18i, 20i which are adapted to slidably receive the other of the first and second members so as to assume the

assembled support receptacle shown in FIG. 11B. Similar to the pivoted connection 28 between the first and second portions of the receptacle support shown in FIG. 3A, cooperating slots 36i or an equivalent releasable means may be adapted to any of the sundries caddies described hereinabove or otherwise within the scope of the present invention.

As used herein, the terms "captured portion" and "free portion" are relative terms and are not to be considered synonymous with either the first or second members of the receptacle support. That is, although the second member of the receptacle support has been described herein as the "free portion," it is equally possible that the first member may assume that role. Likewise, the various means for releasably connecting the receptacle to the receptacle support may be provided on either or both of the first and second members of the receptacle support.

Moreover, means other than those described may be used to releasably connect the receptacle to the receptacle support. Illustrative but non-limitative examples include magnetic means carried by both the receptacle and the receptacle support if the receptacle and receptacle support are non-magnetic, magnetic means carried by a non-magnetic one of the receptacle and receptacle support if the other of the receptacle and receptacle support is magnetic, and magnetic means shared by the receptacle and receptacle support if both are magnetic.

Also, one or both of the first and second members 18, 20 of the receptacle support may be fabricated as two or more telescopic parts whereby the free, receptacle-carrying end of the receptacle support may be adjusted in height.

Although not limited thereto, this feature would be especially useful in the embodiment of the invention depicted in FIGS. 3A and 3B due to the wide range of thicknesses/heights of conventional mattresses.

Although the invention has been described in detail for the purpose of illustration, it is to be understood that such detail is solely for that purpose and that variations can be made therein by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as claimed herein.